

Water Works Operator Certification Program

April 1997
Fact Sheet
Contact: Cheryl Bergener
State Department of Health
(360) 236-3137/1-800-525-2536



Background

The Department of Health (DOH) is responsible for administering a comprehensive water works operator certification program. Chapter 70.119 RCW mandates that the Department test and certify the competence of water system operators. DOH has contracted with Green River Community College, Washington Environmental Training Center to maintain the water works operators' professional growth records, and evaluate and assign continuing education units (CEUs). The DOH Water Works Operator Certification Program (Operator Certification Program) is highly respected, both within Washington State and nationally.

Public Health Issues

The provision of safe and reliable drinking water is a basic public health mandate. In an effort to ensure that this mandate is fulfilled and the health of the citizens of the state using public water supplies protected, the Operator Certification Program examines and certifies the competency of operators in charge of all but the smallest Group A public water systems.

Key Points

- Over 780 water systems are affected by the operator certification requirement. There are more than 2,800 certified water works operators and 1,600 backflow assembly testers in Washington State.
- Water system operations are becoming more complex. Operators and managers need new skills, including financial planning and rate setting, operation and maintenance of new treatment technologies, water quality monitoring, and an understanding of the new regulatory requirements. Because of this, certified operators are required by law to meet a professional growth requirement every three years in order to renew their certification. This growth requirement is fulfilled by attending a required number of approved classes every year.
- The Operator Certification Program is a self-sufficient program. Fees are charged to public water systems and certified operators who benefit from services provided by the program, and deposited into a dedicated water works certification program account.
- The Water Works Operator Certification Advisory Committee (Committee) has responsibility for advising DOH on matters pertaining to the Operator Certification Program. This committee is a sub-committee of the Water Supply Advisory Committee, which advises DOH on all aspects of the Drinking Water Program.

What We're Doing

DOH Drinking Water Division staff have been working on implementation strategies for mandated Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA) provisions with deadlines covering the next several years. DOH is participating at the national level where policy direction is being established and has a representative on the Environmental Protection Agency's Operator Certification Partnership and State Certification committees.

During the coming year, DOH and the Committee will address SDWA provisions operator training issues, development of exams, certified operators for small water systems in violation of drinking water requirements, and other compliance activities.

More Information

Cheryl Bergener, Program Manager, Water Works Operator Certification
Department of Health Drinking Water Program (360) 236-3137 / 1-800-525-2531
Mar 1998

97fscert.doc